

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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R 271317Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5551
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

S E C R E T CAIRO 10048

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR LE PINE PINT MILI

SUBJ: PLO SYRIA AND WEST BANK: SILVER LINING?

REF: BEIRUT 6206

1. REFTTEL SUGGESTED SYRIAN-IMPOSED CEASE-FIRE IN LEBANON, COUPLED WITH SYRIAN UNDERTAKING TO GIVE PLO FACE-SAVING WAY OUT, MIGHT OFFER BREATHING SPELL. IN SUCH AN EVENT, EMBASSY BEIRUT OBSERVED, USG MIGHT CONSIDER UTILITY OF LETTING IT BE KNOWN THAT PALESTINIAN STATE ON WEST BANK/GAZA IS SEEN BY US AS COMPONENT OF OVERALL ME PEACE PLAN.

2. I MAY BE USEFUL IN THIS CONNECTION REITERATE EGYPTIAN VIEWS ON HOW PLO MIGHT BE METAMORPHASIZED FROM CHIEF SPOILER INTO FORCE FOR OVERALL SETTLEMENT. FIRST, IN GOE VIEW, PLO MUST ABOVE ALL BE GIVEN FACE-SAVING WAY OUT OF LEBANON FIASCO. EGYPTIANS BELIEVE FIRMLY

THAT (A) SPIRIT OF PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE CAN NEVER BE CRUSHED OR ABSORBED BY SYRIA AND, (B) SHOULD CURRENT PLO LEADERSHIP BE SWEEPED AWAY IN LEBANESE DEBACLE, RANK AND FILE PLO MODERATES WILL TURN TO RADICALISM; HAVING TRIED AND FAILED WITH ARAFAT'S

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" MODERATION", MOST OF FATAH WOULD MOVE SWIFTLY LEFT, REFUSING

TO ACCEPT WEST BANK STATE, AND ACTIVELY SUBVERTING ANY REAL-
ISTIC PEACE PROCESS.

3. THUS GOE, WHICH WOULD DEARLY LIKE TO SEE PALESTINIANS
DEPRIVED OF THEIR IRRITATING ABILITY ACT AS POLITICAL SPOILERS
FOR ANY SERIOUS PEACE EFFORT, MAINTAINS THAT SYRIAN/CHRIST-
IAN MILITARY " VICTORY" OVER PLO LIKELY MAKE THINGS WORSE.
PALESTINIANS WOULD BECOME LESS, NOT MORE, AN EMANABLE TO
PEACE SETTLEMENT.

4. WE ARE INTERESTED THAT SOME IN GOJ BELIEVE THAT IF SYRIAN
FINISHES OFF PRESENT PLO LEADERSHIP, A "SUPER SA'IRA" COULD
EMERGE (AMMAN 3859, PARA 5). EGYPTIANS AGREE SYRIAN WISHES CREATE
SUCH AN ORGANIZATION, BUT INSIST THAT MOST OF PLO WOULD REFUSE
JOIN. FATAH'S TREASURED INDEPENDENCE OF ACTION, EGYPTIANS ARGUE,
MADE IT MOST POPULAR OF MODERATE PALESTINIAN ORGANIZATIONS;
FATAH MEMBERSHIP, WHICH EGYPTIANS INSIST IS 80 PERCENT OF PALESTIN-
IANS, HOWEVER IT CHOSE REORGANIZE, WOULD NEVER ACCEPT
SYRIAN TUTELAGE.

5. EGYPTIANS FROM HIGHEST LEVEL DOWN LECTURE US DAILY ON THEIR
FEAR THAT USG FAILS UNDERSTAND THAT ARAFAT AND HIS COLLEAGUES,
FRAIL REED OF MODERATION AS THEY ARE (EGYPTIANS COMPLAIN THAT
ARAFAT HAS ABYSMALLY FAILED TO REALLY LEAD THE MODERATES), ARE ALL
THAT STAND AGAINST APPEAL OF FAR LEFT. MFA OFFICIALS IN PARTICULAR
NEVER TIRE OF WARNING US THAT, THOUGH GOE WOULD IDEALLY LIKE
PALESTINIAN
POLITICAL WINGS TO BE CLIPPED TO THE BONE, THIS CANNOT BE DONE-
SPARK OF THE RESISTANCE WILL BE FANNED, NOT EXTINGUISHED,
BY A MILITARY DEFEAT.

6. FOR SOME TIME WE HEARD THAT SADAT HAS BEEN PRESSING ARAFAT
HARD, ARGUING THAT WITH PALESTINIAN BACKS TO THE SEA AND WITH CAIRO
ACCORDS IN SERIOUS JEOPARDY, MODERATE PALESTINIANS MUST GRASP
NETTLE OF PUBLIC ADVOCACY OF WEST BANK STATE AND ORGANIZE GOVERNMENT-
IN -EXILE. CHICKEN-AND-EGG ARGUMENT THAT ISRAEL MUST SPEAK OUT
FIRST HAS BEEN OVERTAKEN, EGYPTIANS REPORTEDLY URGE, BY
DESTRUCTION OF LAST PALESTINIAN SAFE HAVEN.

7. WHILE WE ARE UNDER NO ILLUSIONS AS TO ARAFAT'S WILLING-
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NESS OR ABILITY TO TAKE EGYPTIAN ADVICE, IT IS WORTH REI-
TERATING THAT SADAT HIMSELF SEEM TO BELIEVE LEBANON TRAGEDY COULD SP
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ONE POSITIVE RESULT., I.E., IT IS JUST
CONCEIVABLE THAT IN DESPARATION, FATAH LEADERSHIP, WEAKENED
AS IT IS, COULD BE MANEUVERED INTO MAKING
POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION TO PEACE SETTLEMENT. THUS IT IS THAT SADAT
AND FAHMY ARE CONCERNED THAT SYRIA DOES DECIDE LEAVE FACE-

SAVING WAY OUT FOR FATAH. IF NOT, THE GOE BELEIVES NEXT INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN LEADERSHIP WILL BE HOPELESS-- RADICALS LIKE HABASH WILL NEVER ACCEPT HALF A LOAF AND "SUPER SA'IQA" WILL ATTRACT FEW OF PRESENT FATAH. IT IS IN THIS CONTEXT THAT GOE CONTINUES URGE USG TO "HELP " ARAFAT.

8. COMMENT: GOE BELIEVES ARAFAT MAY BE LOSING OUT TO ABU IYAD AS LEADER OF MODERATE PALESTINIANS. FURTHER, SADAT BELIEVES ABU IYAD IS MORE SUSCEPTIBLE THAN ARAFAT TO EGYPTIAN ADVICE, AND HAS HINTED TO US THAT ABU IYAD, STRONGER AND "MORE DECISIVE", MAY BE GOE CHOICE AS BEST HOPE FOR INJECTING SOME REALISM INTO MODERATES' POLITICAL STRATEGY. THIS ANALYSIS APPEARS STRANGE GAMBLE BY GOE, GIVEN ABU IYAD'S WELL-KNOWN TERRORIST BACKGROUND AS BLACK SEPTEMBER CHIEF. IT MAY WELL BE THAT GOE FEAR OF A PLO RADICALIZATION STEMS IN PART FORM THIS BELIEF THAT ABU IYAD LIKELIEST FATAH SUCCESSOR TO ARAFAT IF MODERATES HUMILIATED IN LEBANON, AND WITH A NEWLY- RADICALIZED ABU IYAD AT THE HELM, FATAH TURN TO THE LEFT COULD SPELL DISASTER FOR SADAT'S WELL -KNOWN PEACE TIME-TABLE, WHICH LISTS NEXT CONCRETE STEP TOWARD SETTLEMENT OCCURRING NO LATER THAN NEXT SPRING.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, PALESTINIANS, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, SELFDETERMINATION, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 27 JUL 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: greeneet
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976CAIRO10048
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760289-0356
From: CAIRO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760719/aaaaaqie.tel
Line Count: 137
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 76 BEIRUT 6206
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: greeneet
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 09 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <09 JUN 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <08 OCT 2004 by greeneet>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PLO SYRIA AND WEST BANK: SILVER LINING?
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, MILI, LE, PLO
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006